

September 10, 2003

TO: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: James E. Hartl, AICP
Director of Planning

**SUBJECT: REPORT TO THE BOARD ON POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE COUNTY
ZONING CODE APARTMENT HOUSE PARKING REQUIREMENTS**
(Motion of July 22, 2003—SYN. NO. 18)

Background

On July 22, 2003, your Board, on the motion of Supervisor Antonovich, directed the Department of Regional Planning to explore possible alternatives to certain current County Zoning Ordinance parking requirements for apartment buildings. You asked that the Department examine the adequacy of requiring only one parking space for smaller apartment units, the efficacy of incorporating Building Code apartment house disabled parking space requirements into the zoning code and requiring that a greater number of such spaces be provided, and the appropriateness of requiring parking spaces for apartment managers and employees of apartment buildings. You also asked us to apprise you of our anticipated schedule for an update of the parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. This report responds to your requests, and it also suggests a strategy for incorporating current emergent parking issues into such an update.

Adequacy of One Parking Space for Smaller Units

Currently, the County Zoning Ordinance requires one parking space for bachelor units, 1½ spaces for one-bedroom units, and two spaces for units having two or more bedrooms. In response to your question as to whether one parking space is enough for the County's smallest apartment units, my staff made a preliminary survey of several other jurisdictions to determine their parking space requirements for bachelor and one-bedroom apartments. Of five local jurisdictions surveyed for their bachelor unit requirements, three require only one parking space per bachelor unit, one requires 1½ parking spaces, and one requires 2 parking spaces.

For one-bedroom apartments, of the five jurisdictions, two require one space per unit, one requires 1½ spaces per unit, one requires 1¾ spaces per unit, and one requires two spaces per unit. Thus, although the County's parking requirements for apartment

The Honorable Board of Supervisors Apartment House Parking

houses are generally in line with other similar jurisdictions, there is precedent among local jurisdictions for requiring a greater number of parking spaces for smaller apartment units—particularly bachelor units. However, it should also be noted that until our receipt of one recent complaint, no complaints had been brought to our attention regarding the adequacy of the County's current apartment house parking standards, and contacts with various apartment associations within Los Angeles County have also indicated that our current parking requirements for small apartment units are working well.

The Zoning Ordinance requires that a minimum of one parking space be assigned to each dwelling unit. This policy not only assures that there will be at least one space specifically available for each unit, but also provides the flexibility for the apartment house manager to allocate additional spaces to residents who may have greater parking needs. The total number of required spaces for each dwelling unit is computed based on the type of apartment.

Thus, County apartment house parking requirements for smaller units are generally in line with other jurisdictions, no complaints regarding their adequacy have been brought to our attention, and other County parking requirements appear to insure the necessary flexibility to facilitate common sense parking solutions for each apartment house. However, given the trend toward rising rents and the increasing need for two working persons--two possible drivers--to live in even the smallest apartment units to meet rental fees, my staff is prepared to further study the adequacy of the County's current requirement of one parking space for each bachelor apartment unit.

Disabled Parking

Your Board was correct in discerning that current Building Code requirements for apartment house disabled parking are not currently incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance currently requires disabled parking spaces for non-residential uses only. While this Department has consistently counseled applicants as to residential disabled parking requirements as well, and while the County is not alone in deferring the application of these requirements to Building Departments, these requirements should be fully incorporated into the County's Zoning Ordinance.

Residential use disabled parking requirements are currently applied by the Department of Public Works Building and Safety Division consistent with County Building Code requirements Specified in Section 1118A. These requirements are entirely consistent with those specified in Section 1118A of the State Building Code. Accordingly, the Building and Safety Division of the Department of Public Works is currently applying these standards, which are as follows: 1) disabled parking must be provided for at least two percent of the dwelling units, and local jurisdictions may permit these spaces to be included within the overall computed number of required parking spaces for an apartment house; however, the County is not precluded from requiring that these spaces be provided over and above the computed overall number of parking spaces; 2) at least five percent of the visitor parking spaces that serve multi-family dwellings must

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
Apartment House Parking

be disabled spaces; and 3) these spaces must remain available to persons with disabilities.

As to whether the number of disabled parking spaces required by the County pursuant to the Building Code is sufficient, our survey of five localities indicates that two of the jurisdictions are not requiring disabled parking spaces for apartment houses at all, one is (mistakenly) applying the State non-residential disabled parking requirements to apartment buildings, and two of the jurisdictions appropriately apply the requirements in the State Building Code. Of the latter, both jurisdictions permit the spaces to be included within the original overall computation of required spaces.

Additional study of this issue is warranted, especially related to the possible need for a greater number of disabled spaces than is currently required under State and County law. Such study should include consultation with representatives of the disabled community.

Parking for Service Vendors and Full-time Employees

With respect to your concerns about the lack of apartment house parking requirements for part-time service vendors and full time employees, our survey of five other local jurisdictions revealed that none of these jurisdictions require such parking. Our contacts with apartment house associations revealed that State law requires an on-site full time manager employee for all apartment houses with more than 16 units. These representatives have informed us that such a full-time manager normally lives in the building, and for this reason, additional parking is not necessary for this manager.

Association representatives also indicated that the part time employees and service-people for apartment houses--such as gardeners, public utility personnel, painters, etc.--generally work during the day, parking in underutilized guest spaces during these hours, or in the street. So the question arises as to how many guest spaces the County currently requires, and as to the appropriateness of requiring additional parking spaces for these part time service-persons. The County Zoning Ordinance currently requires one guest space for every four units in buildings that total 10 units or more. Our survey of the five jurisdictions tells us that, compared to the County, only one of the five jurisdictions requires more guest spaces, two require a comparable number of guest spaces, one requires much less guest spaces, and one (the City of Los Angeles) does not require any guest spaces at all.

While representatives of the apartment house associations contend there is no problem with service-persons parking in guest spaces, the Zoning Code dictates that these spaces must be designated, marked, and used only for guest parking. For this reason we are prepared to further explore the need for apartment house parking for part-time service-persons.

Representatives of the apartment associations also told us that the State does not require additional full time employees for large apartment buildings with many units, but their responses indicate that full time employees are generally hired once a building

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
Apartment House Parking

reaches somewhere around 60 to 100 units, and that very large apartment houses may employ several full time non-resident employees. Once again, while other jurisdictions appear to generally not require additional parking for such full time employees, it may be appropriate to establish a requirement for a specified number of spaces for larger apartment houses. In this respect, the County Zoning Ordinance already contains parking space requirements for office space—including leasing offices—that base parking requirements on the size of the office space. Therefore, study of parking requirements for full-time employees should include a review of the adequacy of current commercial office space parking requirements for application to apartment building office space.

Update of Zoning Ordinance Parking Requirements

The Department of Regional Planning does periodically review and update parking requirements, particularly when new parking-related issues emerge or when complaints are received in connection with current regulations. It appears that this may be an opportune time for an update for several reasons. First, staff concurs that a more detailed review of the County's apartment parking requirements for small units, disabled parking, and service personnel/employee parking should be undertaken, and the current parking regulations should be reviewed for possible changes, particularly for the purpose of incorporating Building Code disabled parking requirements into the Zoning Ordinance.

Secondly, a number of related parking issues are currently pending for further review by staff:

- Compact Parking Provisions: To lower the allowance for and increase the required width of compact parking spaces for commercial and industrial uses.
- Library Parking: The Department of Public Libraries has suggested that it may be appropriate to development specific parking requirements for libraries.
- Minor Deviation from Parking Standards: To provide a less onerous case processing procedure for proposed minor modifications to non-residential parking requirements. (This ordinance was previously adopted by your Board, and subsequent reviews have indicated that additions related to the burden of proof may be appropriate.)

It appears from the status of these various issues that it may be appropriate to fold them all into one parking requirements update. This would be a significant task; however, I have asked my staff to be prepared to undertake such an update. Because of other current work requirements and anticipated additional directives from your Board, such an update could be initiated early next year.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Given your Board's concerns and the preliminary information we have gathered, in our next update of the Zoning Ordinance's parking provisions the Department will:

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
Apartment House Parking

- Further research the appropriateness of possible changes to current apartment house parking requirements in the following areas:
 - The number of parking spaces required for smaller apartment units, particularly bachelor units.
 - Disabled parking space standards, including possible requirements that the mandatory number of disabled spaces be provided over and above—rather than being included within--the overall computed number of required spaces for an apartment house.
- Establish requirements for parking spaces for part and full time employees in large apartment houses.
- Proceed to incorporate Building Code disabled parking requirements into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Combine appropriate apartment house parking ordinance amendments with amendments related to pending compact parking, library parking, “minor deviation from parking standards”, and any other parking related matters.

Additionally, pending an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate Building Code apartment house disabled parking space requirements, I will instruct my staff to continue applying the Building Code disabled parking requirements to zoning applications so that an applicant coming to this Department for a zoning approval will be aware of the standards prior to applying to Building and Safety for a building permit.

It should be noted that when this subject was discussed with the Regional Planning Commission, they expressed some concerns regarding the potential impacts of significant increases of parking requirements on apartment house costs and financial feasibility. The Commission noted that apartment houses represent a viable form of affordable housing and that any additional requirements need to be carefully considered.

We trust that this information will aide you in determining the appropriateness of revisions to the Zoning Ordinance apartment house parking requirements as well as the desirability of updating the Zoning Ordinance in other emergent parking-related areas. If you have any questions about this report or any aspects of parking requirement issues, please call me or Leonard Erlanger of my staff at (213) 974-6432.

JEH:RDH:LE

C: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Director, Department of Public Works
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors